

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

SELECTIONS FROM ROBERT HERRICK. With Drawings by EDWIN A. ARBBY. Quarto, pp. 188. Harper & Brothers.

In the preface of this luxurios volume Austin Dobson writes in felicitous phrase: "With Herrick we become spectators of a country-life which time has 'softly moulded in the fibry blue' of doubtful remoteness, and ever which his poetry has cast its inimitable, its imperishable charm. With him we walk about our hours."

"Our hours...

Not envying other's larger grounds,

and watch—A moment Godlike Power

Imperious in each Hour and Flower;

And smell the breath of great-y'd Kines,

Sweet as the blossoms of the Vine!"

We are never tired of hearing him sing of Julius's dress and its "brave Inspiration," of her "handsome Anger" of her "Lasses" and "Tiffans," her "haire filled with Dew," and her "Quarelets with her Eyes." Nor is it any defect in this delightful lyrics that (as Horace before him) he sings with equal gusto of Diana and Venus, of Electra and Athene, or of the three "dainty Destines" who weave his "Armet." And now again we take part in that fairy service of King Oberon—or we assist at those pretty Pagan hymnals where he bawls "Daffodils" to Bacchus, or a peacock to Juno, or a "blonde-feet Owl" to Minerva.

In these extracts from Mr. Dobson's tenderly appreciative preface can be seen something of the task set the artist who would transform one art to another by catching the subtle spirit of Herrick's musical humdrums, and placing that very spirit in embodied form before our eyes. Surely here is a heavy draft not merely on the versatility of the artist's talents, but on the tenderness and keenness of his sympathies, on all the sensitive faculties which go to make up the power of entering into a poet's moods and marking their influence felt through a different medium. It is no light praise to say that Mr. Abney has proved himself equal to his task. Aided, not hampered, by his historical studies and his search for local coloring in the lanes and meads of Devonshire, Mr. Abney decks his creations with a dainty grace or elighn pionency peculiarly their own, while the disquietingly human quality of the poet's verse is never lost. Every reader of *Harper's Magazine* has felt the charm of Mr. Abney's frolicsome swains and rustic maids, his jovial thinkers, coy nymphs and bold gallants; but to some the landscape on pages 5, 31, 55 and 135, and the less satisfactory work on pages 97 and 159, will present a new phase of the artist's work. Who can look upon the peaceful, lovely English landscape depicted on page 5 and doubt the strong hold that Nature has upon the artist; or who can fail to admire the skill which, not content with mere literal rendition, has so craftily seized the best vantage-ground for a true picture? In the two figures placed on the sunny slope of the hillside one reads a keen perception of artistic fitness. They break up the sameness of the slope, at once attract the eye which wanders from them to the shady grove above, and although not the central point of the picture, form an accessory without which the sense of harmony would have been lacking. It would be better still had the engraver accentuated the hood of the woman with the basket by leaving at a clearer white, although he was probably prevented by fear of timering the cottages whose chimneys seem to be the keynote. Then turning the page we come to perhaps the most delightful idyl of pastoral life that we shall see. Here are the neatherds rousing from their lounging on the grass as they propose.

The singer who the best shall play,

Or else, I of the Roundelay.

while buxom Lelane langes against the stile to hear the contest. Then we see her perched upon the upper step with arms akimbo and attentive expression, as befits a critical judge. Again she softens at the sound of the pipes, so fatidues as to sent herself upon the grass and hastes in palm, with all her care; then rising in exquisite pose, interposes to prevent dispute, and finally, dignity thrown to the winds, joins the neatherds in a merry dance. Less careful work is shown in the illustration of "A Short Hymn to Venus" which must have been executed in the artist's idle hour; and less attractive, too, is the tank, short-waited virgin on page 29. But there is no danger of being eloyed with eaten pipes and rose gardens. Mr. Abney's skill in transfixing movement is well shown in the spirit and action of the two figures, "Delight in Disorder" and "His Cavalier." He has indeed placed before us

—that man that dares bestride,

The active sea-horse, and with pride

Through that huck of a horse ride;

But though some strikingly wild and impish for so hackneyed subjects, his fancy depicts the reckless chaise that goes on wheels.

"The Hay is ready;

For to ride;

The Devil and shee together;

Mr. Abney shows admirable power to convey the serious sentiments as well as ability to express humor. There is a pleasant flavor in the illustration of the song of the Tinkers, whose faces so plainly show their gueful content, and a subtler sense of humor is evinced in "A Ceremony on Candlemas" (in the golden figure of "Blanche's Husband," and in "The Ass that carried the Spur"); the last two have a tartness that adds relish.

Something might be added to the expressive poses and admirable treatment of the "Frolick Virgins" of "The Bride Cake." "Upon an Old Woman," "Julia," "Susanna," "Amazyllis," and the wild paths of "The Mad Maid." But enough has said, perhaps, to show the salient qualities of Mr. Abney's work, which may be characterized as grace, an originality, quaint humor, and a keen sensibility to graver moods and spirited action.

As to technique Mr. Abney proves himself not only a finished draughtsman, but he reveals a keen eye for situations and a truly refreshing sense of proportion and of grouping. There are bits of drawing which are erroneous, there are vacant spaces which might be brightened, there are errors of judgment or of taste, but they are few and it would be invidious to dwell on minor flaws when the work as a whole touches so high a degree of excellence.

Mr. Abney is fortunate in having been so well seconded by the engraver, and fortunate, too, in having his work appear in so sumptuous a form. With its pictures by the old lyric bard so happily brought before us by the poetry of a brother artist, with its preface by one of the sweetest modern poets, its type also from across the seas, its rivulet of text meandering between broad, delightful margins of richest cream paper, this volume is one to covet. Only unfortunate is it in its cover, which on a background of a sickly mustard color, soiling at every touch, places the sun in a huge gilded blot with beans which, like the antennae of a crushed spider, straggle awkwardly hither and thither, losing themselves among the black and red of the affected and grotesque lettering. Surety so noble a volume was worth a more tasteful and enduring garnish than this tawdry dress.

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